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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL  
JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [TU](#)  
SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
MONDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2008

In Today's Papers

PKK Attack Kills 15 Turkish Soldiers

All media outlets reported over the weekend and today that the PKK attacked the Aktutun military outpost near Simdili, in the border province of Hakkari on Friday afternoon. 15 Turkish soldiers were killed and 22 others were wounded when a group of approximately 350 terrorists attacked the outpost. Twenty-three terrorists were killed and two soldiers went missing in a fight that lasted five hours. The military General Staff (TGS) said in a statement issued Saturday that most of the losses were caused by heavy weapon fire that came from northern Iraq. Papers report the latest incident is the fifth terrorist attack against the Aktutun gendarme outpost. Leftist Taraf reported Sunday, "The TGS must account for its failure to ensure the safety of the Aktutun outpost."

On Sunday, the military General Staff (TGS) Deputy Chief General Hasan Igsiz held a press briefing about the PKK attack in Aktutun. Igsiz said Aktutun as well as four other outposts on the border will be moved to safer locations. Mainstream Sabah criticizes the decision for coming "too late," saying the decision came after 44 soldiers died in five different PKK attacks on the outpost. "The state spends one trillion YTL to buy a luxury armored car for the retired TGS Chief Yasar Buyukanit, but the transfer of five military outposts to safer locations is delayed because of financial troubles," criticizes mainstream Vatan. Igsiz blamed the Kurdish administration of northern Iraq for "providing the PKK terrorists with transportation, shelter and medical treatment." In addition, General Igsiz said the attack on Aktutun had not occurred due to an intelligence failure, and stressed "there is no problem in intelligence sharing with the U.S."

In "Turkey Mourns the Deaths of 15 Soldiers in the Aktutun Attack," mainstream Vatan as well as all other dailies report that on Sunday, tens of thousands of mourners across Turkey joined the funerals of the soldiers killed in the attack. Papers also report a government decree re-authorizing cross-border military operations into northern Iraq will be discussed by the parliament on October 8.

Domestic Reactions to the PKK Attack in Aktutun

Sunday papers report that following the attack, Ankara presented a note of protest to Iraq, and warned the U.S. that the Kurdish administration of northern Iraq failed to meet Turkish expectations in the fight against terror. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet notes that so far, Turkey has presented five notes of protest to Iraq demanding measures to blocking the infiltrations of PKK terrorists into Turkey, but the Aktutun attack clearly shows that Iraq ignores all such diplomatic initiatives. The paper notes "Diplomacy has not helped resolve the problem."

On Saturday, Prime Minister Erdogan cut his Central Asian tour short and returned to Ankara to chair a meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Board. In a statement after the meeting, the board said the fight against terrorism would continue with determination. President Abdullah Gul cancelled his scheduled trips to France and Switzerland over the weekend. In a televised statement on Saturday, President Abdullah Gul condemned the terrorist attack and stressed that those cooperating with and sheltering the terrorists would be punished. During a Sunday funeral of a soldier slain in Aktutun, Erdogan called on the Turkish people to preserve their unity and strength. Erdogan said the statements coming from the U.S. and the EU had not been helpful in resolving the problem of terror. Erdogan reiterated his call to the West to take steps to cut financial support for terror and added that terrorists should not be provided with shelter.

Opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal said Turkey must adopt a new understanding in the fight against terror. "As long as those who refrain from labeling this incident as a terrorist act continue their activities in this country, the fight against terror will face

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serious hardships," emphasized Baykal. Opposition far right MHP leader Devlet Bahceli called on the government to take all necessary measures for the elimination of terrorist elements at home and on the other side of the border. Tabloid Aksam expects the military to ask the government at a terror summit on Thursday to declare "martial law" in the mainly Kurdish southeast Turkey.

#### International Reactions to Aktutun Attack

In "Global Reaction to the PKK Attack," mainstream Milliyet says on its front page "unprecedented" reactions came from around the world to the terrorist attack on Aktutun outpost. "The U.N., the U.S., Britain, Sweden as well as the northern Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) reacted strongly to the bloody attack," says Milliyet.

On Saturday, the U.S. Ankara Embassy released a statement that condemned the attack and called on the PKK to lay down its arms and end the violence "once and for all." Sunday papers report NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer condemned the attack and gave a message of solidarity with Turkey in the fight against terror. EU Term President France as well as the bloc's foreign policy chief Javier Solana expressed support for Turkey's fight against the PKK. Iraqi President Jalal Talabani called President Gul and said the attack in Aktutun was a crime against Turks and Kurds, as well as against the entire Iraqi people. Talabani also proposed the Tripartite Security Committee convene immediately, according to papers. Monday papers report Massoud Barzani, the president of the northern Kurdish administration of Iraq, strongly condemned the PKK attack after meeting yesterday with the Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte in the city of Selahaddin. Mainstream Hurriyet reports the Kurdish administration of northern Iraq also condemned the attack, but described the attack as a "military act" rather than an act of "terrorism."

TGS: Turkish Fighter Jets Strike PKK Camps in Northern Iraq  
Media outlets carry excerpts from Turkish General Staff's most recent statement about a cross border operation has been launched after the PKK attack against Turkish border station, Aktutun. The TGS statement reads, "Turkish jets conducted an air operation to Avasin in northern Iraq. All units participating the operation returned home safely. As always, PKK/Kongra Gel was the main target of this operation and every effort was made to avoid any civilian harm."

Editorial Commentary on PKK Terror

Hakan Albayrak wrote in Islamist leaning Yeni Safak: "It is impossible to end PKK violence unless radical steps are taken to eliminate the reasons why the PKK has emerged as an entity."

Ismet Berkan wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "The key point to a peaceful solution is to stop people from joining the PKK. Have we ever honestly asked ourselves the question, 'Why are those kids joining the PKK and choosing to die?' Once we find an answer to this question, we will pave the way to the end of the war."

Fatih Cekirge wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "Talabani's visit to Ankara and his recent meeting with Gul in New York softened the Turkish-Iraqi tensions regarding the PKK. But now, President Gul has openly blamed the 'accomplices' in this attack, which is a direct reference to the northern Iraqi administration. In other words, Gul's upcoming visit to Baghdad has already lost its significance. On the other hand, there are many question marks about the attack. In particular, terrorists were able to launch an attack in broad daylight despite the intelligence sharing mechanism with the United States. A high-level official told me, 'There has been no intelligence-sharing (with the U.S.) since the last operation. In fact, a non-stop intelligence sharing mechanism on that level is not possible and (since the last military operation) Turkey has gathered intelligence by using its own capacity.' All of this means that Turkey enjoyed the intelligence-sharing mechanism so the U.S. could

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keep Turkey from becoming a threat to Kirkuk and other Iraqi civilian areas."

Mustafa Balbay wrote in leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet: "TGS Deputy Chief General Hasan Igsiz told the press at TGS headquarters yesterday, 'Thursday's meeting of the High Council Against Terror will not be another ordinary gathering of the board.' On questions regarding the intelligence cooperation with the U.S., General Igsiz said, 'We have no problem regarding the intelligence sharing with the U.S.' The TGS deems it important to keep the U.S. on its side in the fight against terror. Now it's the AKP government's turn. Let's see whether they'll manage to keep Ankara in unity in the face of terror, which has been rising steadily since 2005."

Mehmet Kamis in Islamist-leaning Zaman: "Soon after he assumed office, TGS Chief General Ilker Basbug went to Diyarbakir and Van to spread messages of love to the people in the region. In Van, he mixed with people and chatted with a bearded old man. This picture was very important. I believe the attack on Aktutun was in response to this picture."

1A. Turan Alkan in Islamist-leaning Zaman: "If the government had acknowledged failure and resigned after the first Aktutun attack, then a second, third, fourth and fifth attack on the outpost would never have happened. In countries like Turkey, administrators 'save the day' by making heroic statements. Meanwhile, the children of ordinary people like us continue to be attacked and killed."

18 Illegal Immigrants Killed in Traffic Accident in Tekirdag  
All major television news and newspapers report the deaths of 18 illegal immigrants who were on their way to Europe. 25 were injured and 18 died of suffocation in a truck after a traffic accident in Turkey's Tekirdag province near Istanbul. A truck filled with 43 illegal migrants veered off the road on the Tekirdag-Malkara highway after the driver lost control due to speeding. The migrants were left stranded in the vehicle after the driver fled the scene. The injured migrants were sent to hospitals in the area. Papers report Tekirdag Governor Nezih Dogan told the press, "Security forces are trying to find the driver of the truck, which appears to have been specifically designed for human smuggling. The majority of people who died were from Myanmar and Pakistan." Governor Dogan also added that all the migrants were planning to enter Greece.

Editorial Commentary on U.S. Election Campaign

Omer Taspinar wrote in mainstream Sabah: "Ankara must look warmly at Obama. He is very close to winning the White House. This is mainly due to the financial crisis in the U.S. and Obama's ability to be

calm and 'cold-blooded' in order to keep the U.S. from descending into panic. Because of this, Obama is much closer today to becoming president. Turkey also must be cold-blooded. While Obama is seen as an ally of the Armenian diaspora, he may change his mind regarding his call to recognize the events of 1915 as 'genocide,' much like Bill Clinton did after he became president. Let's not forget that a historical commission to examine this problem has not been established. While McCain was opposed to Bush in 2000, he is now very close to the neo cons. Ankara must ask itself some important questions... about a potential war between the U.S. and Iran and about the damage this or the tensions between the U.S. and Russia can do to Ankara. Obama is the better choice for Ankara. Let's look at this from the perspective of a more democratic and developed world."

TV News:  
CNN Turk

#### Domestic News

- On October 8, State Minister Mehmet Simsek will travel to Washington to participate in the annual IMF-World Bank meetings.

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- 146 people were killed and 649 others were injured in traffic accidents around Turkey during the nine-day Ramadan holiday.

#### International News

- The leaders of Germany, France, Britain and Italy called for tighter regulation and a coordinated response to the global meltdown, but failed to agree on an EU-wide plan on how to deal with the crisis.

- A 6.9-magnitude earthquake is reported in Kyrgyzstan.

WILSON